(b) if so, to what extent these objective have been achieved and what strategy is being adopted in this regard; and

(c) what is the amount of investment made, both foreign and indigenous, separately, in mining sector after announcement of the New Mineral Policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) The Main objectives of the National Mineral Policy, 1993 inter-alia, include giving special attention to exploration and development of metals and minerals in which the country has poor and inadequate resource base. Following an integrated approach for mineral development under the Policy, therefore, benefit development of backward areas since mineral deposits generally occur in remote and backward areas.

(b) and (c) The Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 was amended in 1994 for implementing the objectives of the National Mineral Policy, 1993. The guidelines for attracting private sector investment including foreign direct investment and prospecting over large areas were also laid down Implementation of the National Mineral Policy is an ongoing process. Under the Policy, 65 applications for prospecting licences over large area covering more than 90, 142 square kilometers have been approved so far. As grant of mineral concessions is done by the State Governments, comprehensive information regarding investment made in the mining sector through indigenous/foreign direct investment is not maintained centrally. However, the Foreign Investment Promotion Board has approved 57 proposals involving foreign direct investment amounting to Rs. 3367 crores in the mining sector.

Use of Obsolete Equipment by GSI

1464. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that the Geological Survey of India is still using obsolete equipment as against the technology available;

(b) Whether the GSI needs to equip itself with latest state-of-the-art technology; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) to (c) There is a constant need for technological upgradation of equipment being used by GSI and as such, upgradation of equipment and machines is always an ongoing activity. Currently, this is being done under Plan schemes funded from the budget and also augmented by Aid routed through the budget.

Marble Mining in Rajasthan

†1465. SHRI ONKAR SINGH LAKHAWAT: Will the Minister of MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of Marble mines in the country every year and what is the share of Rajasthan; and

(b) the action being taken by Government to promote Marble mining in Rajasthan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (PROF. RITA VERMA): (a) Marble being a minor mineral its regulation and developments is monitored by the State Governments. As such, information regarding production of marble is available with the respective State Governments. On an average India's annual production of marble is reported to be around 37 lakh tonnes. The Government of Rajasthan has reported that during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99, 31.14 lakh tonnes, 34.41 lakh tonnes and 35.74 lakh tonnes respectively of marble were produced in the State.

(b) Marble being a minor mineral no action is being taken by the Central Government to promote marble mining in Rajasthan. However, the State Government of Rajasthan has informed that a "Marble Policy" was announced by them in 1944 for development of marble in the State which has resulted in the increase in production of marble from around 20 lakh tonnes to 35 lakh tonnes in a period of 5 years.

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.